



State Representative

Eric Pettigrew

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- Community & Economic Development & Trade
(Vice Chair)
- Appropriations
- Early Learning & Children's Services

2008 Session News

A Report to the 37th District



Dear neighbors,

This newsletter is my chance to tell you about some of the things we did this session. I'm happy to say we finished work on time and passed a balanced budget that puts \$834 million in the bank for a rainy day.

We also passed a number of reforms that matter to our families and neighborhoods here in the 37th District. Among the issues we tackled:

Education – closing the achievement gap, improving early learning and bringing all-day kindergarten to more schools.

Poverty and hunger – getting healthy food from local farms to our school lunches and boosting food stamps to keep up with the price of food.

Affordable housing – reforming the system to prevent citizens from getting conned into subprime loans or deceptive mortgages.

This newsletter isn't big enough to talk about every issue the House and Senate addressed. If you have questions about a specific topic or bill, please send me an e-mail at pettigrew.eric@leg.wa.gov or call the toll-free Hotline at 800-562-6000.

You can also reach me at my district office at 219 First Avenue, Suite 205. The phone number there is 206-587-5543.

As always, I appreciate your comments, ideas and questions. It's great to be back home with my family and neighbors now that session is over and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Rep. Eric Pettigrew

State Representative Eric Pettigrew

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

The fundamental principle behind our public schools is opportunity, the idea that every child — rich or poor, black or white, Asian or Latino — should get a great education.

We tend to take this idea for granted. America is the birthplace not only of modern democracy but of a radically different model for education, with public schools for all instead of the private schools of Britain and Europe, where only the wealthy got educated. It's good that other nations adopted our model for public schools.

Yet it's easy to talk about giving every child a great education. The tough part is making it happen.

It took Brown vs. Board of Education to stop segregated schools and it will take more work to make sure every child, regardless of income or color, gets the great education they need to succeed at work and in life.

We can do better for our kids — for all of them, whether it's the daughter of a doctor or the son of a diesel mechanic.

Closing the gap

To make sure every student has a chance, I wrote House Bill 2722 and fought for funding in the budget to tackle this problem.

Different populations of students face different challenges. One solution does not fit all.



House Bill 2722

focuses on closing the achievement gap for African-American Students; the 2008 budget also includes funding to find reforms that work for Native-American students, Asian-Pacific Islanders and Hispanic students.

Additionally, the budget we just passed includes grants to see how the Flight Program can work as a model of how school districts and partner with the community to give more students a chance at success.

Keeping kids in school

About one out of four students drop out before they graduate from high school. That's tragic, and it doesn't have to be that way.

We're working on creative ways to keep students in school and make sure they graduate. That includes

funding in the budget to help struggling students pass the state WASL and bonuses at low-income schools for teachers who get their National Board Certification.

The Drop-Out Prevention Project (House Bill 1573) is also underway and if its successful, that program should be expanded to make sure more students get their high school diploma.

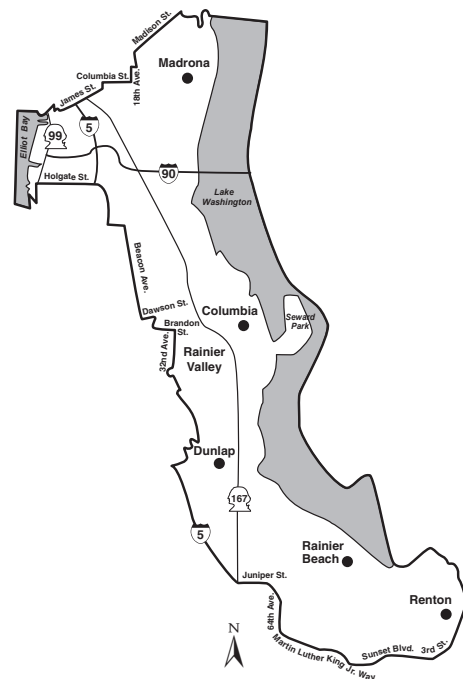
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE - NO HANDCUFFS

As I told you in the last newsletter, some King County schools have gotten into the bad habit of handcuffing students and using excessive force.

Our school kids aren't criminals on death row. They're students. Seattle School District has a no-touch policy and if that policy works in the toughest schools in Seattle, then schools in the suburbs can treat students like humans.



I introduced legislation to fix this and got \$40,000 in the budget to create model policy for school districts, so they can train security staff to calm things down rather than escalate a situation by hitting kids with batons or using handcuffs as a first resort.



37th District

A Report to the 37th District

EARLY LEARNING

Scientists now tell us that the early years matter most, that birth-to-five shapes a child more than we ever expected.

That's why I fight so hard to make sure every family can send their child to a top-quality preschool. On the first day of kindergarten, half of that class full of five-year-olds is already behind. Many never catch up. If we care about giving every child a chance, we have to do a better job on early learning.

This session, we did two big things that built on our earlier landmark reform.

Head Start

The first thing we did is move toward a single, successful model for early learning. Right now, we have Head Start (which is federal) and ECEAP (a state program). The House and Senate passed a reform to consolidate our state programs and unite everything under the Head Start model. This is good news for our kids, our teachers and our parents.

All-day kindergarten

It's a fact that students in all-day kindergarten do better than those in half-day classes. With this budget, we continued to expand all-day kindergarten to more low-income schools. My goal is to have all-day kindergarten in every school district from Seattle to Spokane.



KINSHIP CARE

What would happen to your kids or grandkids if you weren't there?

Often, the state has to step in when children or vulnerable adults don't have any family to take care of them. This is an imperfect system. The best thing is to have other family members – often grandparents, when it comes to children – do the job.

The budget we passed includes funding to expand the kinship care navigators program, which is essential to improving how we support family caregivers. These are people who never planned to be raising kids or taking care of relatives, and it's only right that the state do what it can to support them. The budget we passed puts us closer to the goal of having a Kinship Care Navigator in all 13 regions in the state.

FIGHTING POVERTY AND HUNGER

Local Farms and Healthy Kids

I wrote this law (House Bill 2798) to bring fresh food from local farms to our students in public schools. Do you remember eating school lunch? I remember pizza and tator tots and sloppy joes. And while a lot of schools are doing innovative things these days with healthier food, many schools are still feeding students a lot of processed foods.

This law means our schools will buy more fresh fruits and vegetables from local farms. It's good for our students, because we know real food improves their behavior, attendance and focus. It's hard to perform well academically when your belly is empty – or you're hopped up on candy bars and soda pop.

This law also changes state policy to encourage colleges and other state agencies to buy food from local farms, and it includes an educational aspect, sending children on field trips to these farms so they better understand where food comes from and how it's grown.

I was happy to work with parents, teachers and farmers on this bill. It passed the House and Senate unanimously.

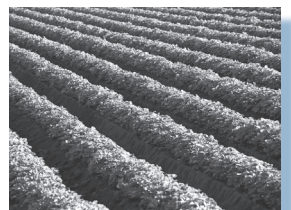
Food stamps

The price of food has skyrocketed along with the price of fuel. With the national economy in trouble, it's smart for us to be ready if we need to help more hungry families.

The budget includes a \$1.1 million boost in funding for food stamps.

Temporary aid to needy families

We know an economic downturn hits working families first. To keep up with inflation and the cost of food and fuel, the budget includes a 3 percent raise to help people get back on their feet if the worst happens to their family.



A Report to the 37th District

NEW LOCAL PROJECT

I'm happy to report that the state's construction budget now includes \$450,000 for a local project, the Rainier Valley Boys and Girls Club.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Too many families can't afford to buy a house because prices are so high. And many other families are in danger of losing their homes because they got sucked into subprime mortgages or adjustable rates that are just now kicking in with higher and higher payments.

To protect citizens from subprime loans and deceptive lending practices, we passed a package of reforms:

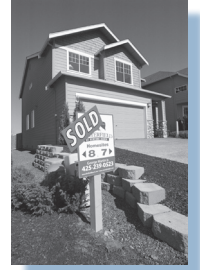
House Bill 2770 sets up limits on pre-payment penalties and forbids brokers from tricking unwary borrowers into accepting a subprime loan when they know that the borrower is qualified for a lower interest loan.

Senate Bill 6381 creates fiduciary duties for mortgage brokers, ensuring that they look out for the interest of borrowers.

Senate Bill 6471 protects consumers by closing a loophole between federal and state jurisdictions and requires all mortgage brokers be regulated by the State Department of Financial Institutions.

Senate Bill 6272 expands financial literacy through education and counseling to promote greater homeownership security.

House Bill 2014 requires landlords to provide tenants with relocation compensation for condominium conversions and extends the time period that tenants have to move out to 120 days. It also allows cities to restrict the number of condominium conversions.



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to the
37th
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